

Creativity Among Working Writers: A Validation of the Scale of Creative Attributes and Behavior

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ABSTRACT – Creativity is a multidimensional construct influenced by personality, motivation, and engagement in creative activity. The Scale of Creative Attributes and Behavior (SCAB; Kelly, 2004) was developed to assess creativity across five components—creative engagement, creative cognitive style, spontaneity, tolerance, and fantasy. This brief report examined the criterion validity of the SCAB using a sample of professional writers ($n = 83$) and college students ($n = 85$). Analyses of covariance, controlling age, indicated that writers scored significantly higher on the SCAB total scale than students. Multivariate analysis revealed significant group differences for creative engagement, cognitive style, and fantasy, but not for spontaneity or tolerance. These findings provide further support for the SCAB as a valid measure of creative personality and behavior and suggest that real-world creative engagement is associated with higher self-reported creativity, particularly in domains requiring imaginative and cognitively flexible thought.

Keywords:

Creativity; Creative behavior; Personality assessment; Criterion validity; Individual differences; Writers; Divergent thinking; Creative cognition

Introduction

Creativity measures have focused on creativity as a trait, mostly measuring divergent thinking (e.g., Guilford, 1968; Torrance, 1974) and creative achievement (Ludwig, 1992; Epstein 1999). Creativity is influenced by personality, motivation (Gardner, 1997) and devotion to creative activities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Research has linked creativity to intelligence, divergent thinking, schizotypy, openness to new experiences, intrinsic motivation, and enjoyment of creative expression (Batey & Furnham, 2009; Feist, 1998; Simonton, 1999; Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009).

After a review of the literature, Simonton (1999) identified findings related to creativity including intelligence, divergent cognitive style, openness to new ideas, motivation, and enjoyment of creating. Although outstanding creative products or ideas are rare, creative activities often lead to a high level of production (Simonton, 1997). Many individuals engage in creative ventures, although only a handful of

those individuals are considered to have creative genius. More commonly, however, individuals participate in creative thinking and activities without achieving reverence or universal acclaim.

Kelly (2004) developed the Scale of Creative Attributes and Behavior (SCAB) based on previous research proposing five underlying components of creativity: creative engagement, creative cognitive style, spontaneity, tolerance, and fantasy. The SCAB is a multidimensional measure designed to assess behavioral, cognitive, and personality factors which, when taken together, account for creativity. Previous research has found the SCAB to be related to self-reports of artistic vocational interests (Kelly & Kneipp, 2009), enjoyment of creative expression, reading for pleasure (Kelly & Daughtry, 2008), and enjoyment of complex aesthetic stimuli (Kelly & Kelly, 2014).

Although the SCAB has adequate preliminary validity, further research is needed to establish its link to “real-world” criteria. Using a sample of working writers, this brief report explores the criterion validity of the SCAB. It was expected that writers would routinely spend time engaged in creative activities, utilize a creative cognitive style, and engage in fantasy.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Participants consisted of both a criterion group of 83 writers (69 females, 14 males) recruited through writing groups and associations and a control group of students. The writer group had an average age of 47.20 years ($SD = 12.08$). The control group included 85 college students (73 females, 12 males) recruited from undergraduate psychology courses. The student group had an average age of 25.51 years ($SD = 7.23$).

Writers were provided the questionnaire as hardcopies to complete individually. Students completed the questionnaire as hardcopies in small groups. The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical principles of the American Psychological Association. All participants provided informed consent.

Measures

Scale of Creative Attributes and Behavior. Creativity was measured using the self-report 20-item Scale of Creative Attributes and Behavior (SCAB; Kelly, 2004). Participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Kelly (2004) reported the SCAB to possess adequate reliability, factorial validity, and relations with hypothetically related variables. Retest reliability was reported as (.80, one month). Higher scores indicate more creativity.

Results and Discussion

No significant differences were found between gender groups. However, there was a significant difference between groups for age with writers being older than the student sample, $t(163) = 14.0, p < .001$. Therefore, age was used as a covariate for further analyses. An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was calculated using group (writers and students) as the independent variable and total SCAB scores as the dependent variable. Age was used as covariate. There was a significant difference between groups. Writers ($M = 115.7$) scored significantly higher on the SCAB than the student sample ($M = 91.6$), $F(1, 164) = 129.47, p < .001$.

To Investigate the differences between groups for each SCAB factor a Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was calculated using group as the independent variable, the five SCAB factors as dependent variables, and age as the covariate. A Wilks' Lambda (.51) revealed an overall significant finding, $F(5, 156) = 29.6, p < .001$. Findings for the factors are presented in Table 1.

These findings extend prior evidence supporting the SCAB's validity (Kelly, 2004; Kelly & Kneipp, 2009). The elevated scores of professional writers across multiple SCAB dimensions suggest that creative engagement, cognitive style, and imaginative thinking are particularly salient in real-world creative

contexts. Non-significant differences for spontaneity and tolerance may reflect the structured routines writers maintain to sustain productivity or the exposure of college students to diverse perspectives (Feist, 1998).

Table 1: MANCOVA results for Scale of Creative Attributes and Behavior factors

Scale	α	Writers		Students		F	p
		M	SD	M	SD		
SCAB total	.90	115.7	12.5	91.6	14.7		
Engagement	.85	24.2	3.1	16.2	5.1	55.0	<.001
Cognitive style	.87	24.0	3.1	18.9	4.3	27.7	<.001
Spontaneity	.84	19.8	5.0	17.1	5.9	2.7	.10
Tolerance	.76	23.1	3.9	21.8	3.4	0.77	.38
Fantasy	.68	24.6	3.6	17.4	2.9	82.4	.001

Note: SCAB = Scale of Creative Attributes and Behavior

The study contributes to the understanding of creativity as both a dispositional and behavioral phenomenon, consistent with process models emphasizing the interaction between personality, domain-relevant skills, and motivation (Amabile, 1996; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Future research could explore longitudinal relationships between SCAB scores and objective creative output, as well as cross-domain applicability in visual arts, music, and entrepreneurship.

Overall, the SCAB demonstrates criterion validity in distinguishing individuals engaged in professional creative work from those with less extensive creative engagement. These findings reinforce the importance of multidimensional assessments in understanding creativity and provide a foundation for future research linking self-reported creative attributes to measurable outcomes.

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